



Canadian
Chamber of
Commerce

Chambre de
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du Canada

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Business
Matters.

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affaires sont
importantes.

Sent via email

April 12, 2021

Premiers of Canada's Provinces and Territories
Council of the Federation

Re: Deployment of rapid screening

Dear Premiers:

As Canada enters a new and more dangerous phase of the pandemic, our priority must be to protect the health of our population as we permit the safe operation of our economy. Achieving this goal will require close collaboration among governments, public health authorities and other organisations, including businesses.

The increasing rollout of vaccinations has brought hope to Canadians, but it will be several months before everyone who wants the vaccine is fully immunized. Until then, we need to aggressively implement a range of measures to break COVID-19's transmission chain.

Rapid screening, which enables people who may be infectious to be identified and directed towards a confirmatory PCR test, is critical to keeping the disease in check. Unfortunately, the use of this essential tool that can save lives and help the reopening of our economy has been slow and uneven across Canada. When millions of test kits sit unused in warehouses, they are not protecting Canadians or helping them resume more ordinary lives.

Canada's businesses know that rapid testing can both reduce the spread of COVID-19 and increase the public's confidence that we are acting appropriately to protect our employees and customers. Unfortunately, instead of encouraging deployment of these life-saving tests, regulations in many parts of the country make their use impossible, particularly for the small and medium-sized enterprises that make up 98 percent of Canada's businesses. We urgently need a simplified approach to lower the costs of testing and to make it as accessible as possible to businesses.

Government regulations present a significant barrier for companies wanting to implement rapid screening. The kits themselves are designed to be administered quickly and easily. They do not require skilled medical personnel to be diverted from other important functions to administer them. Indeed, in much of the country, navigating the regulations regarding their use is significantly more complex and more expensive than administering the tests themselves.

To support the deployment of rapid screening, provincial and territorial governments regulations should allow laypersons to quickly become trained to administer the tests. Such a model, based on what Ontario has already put in place, will reduce costs and allow for simpler delivery. It will also reduce the burden on health care professionals whose skills are needed in other areas.

Office of the President and Chief Executive Officer | Cabinet du président et chef de la direction

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Governments should work with the private sector in identifying the types of organisations — particularly where physical distancing may be difficult or even impossible — where rapid testing will be most beneficial. Additionally, they should identify how the use of rapid testing, along with other appropriate safety measures, can reduce the need for severe restrictions on the businesses that implement them, thereby providing an even greater incentive to implement public health measures.

With Canada in the third wave of COVID-19, rapid screening will help break transmission chains, in turn lowering the risk of workplace outbreaks and reducing burdens on hospitals. With infections in Canada rising at an alarming rate, we need everyone — governments, businesses and individuals alike — to work together to save lives and protect our economy.

The Chamber CEO in your province or territory would welcome the opportunity to discuss further how we can support these critical changes and see them in executed in an urgent manner.

Sincerely,

Hon. Perrin Beatty, P.C., O.C.
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